

A 'bad' show rates highest

The identity of the masked Black Scorpions won't go down as one of television's greatest mysteries. But there was enough curiosity Wednesday night to set a cable TV wrestling viewership record.

For those who haven't been following the National Wrestling Alliance, its world champion, Sting, was to have a mysterious foe — clues to his identity were left weekly — on the TBS "Clash of the Champions" special from Asheville, N.C.

The Black Scorpion did a series of voice-altered interviews, and vowed to reveal his identity should Sting defeat him. Television viewers were left frustrated by the show because the identity of the Scorpion remained concealed. However, NWA officials were anything but frustrated by the ratings.

The 2½-hour special drew a 5.0 rating, good for 2.76 million homes, making it the largest audience ever to watch an NWA broadcast. The last half-hour of the show, a U.S. title match with Lex Luger vs. Ric Flair plus Sting-Scorpion, drew a 6.8 rating in 3.75 million homes, making them the two most widely viewed cable matches ever. The show went against stiff competition on cable. The Mets-Pirates game gave ESPN its highest rating of the season, a 4.0. The U.S. Open on USA did a 2.7.

Sting pinned The Scorpion (in reality former WWF preliminary wrestler Al Perez) in 8:10. But when he went to remove the Scorpion's black mask, he found a red mask underneath. At the same time, another man wearing an outfit identical to that of Perez appeared in the aisle (Dave Sheldon, who wrestles in Texas as Angel of Death). As the story goes, the man in the aisle is the real Black Scorpion. The one in the ring was a fake. Thus Sting and the "real" Scorpion will wrestle at NWA arena shows starting this coming weekend.

The Sting-Perez match left a lot to be desired, however. Without the benefit of wrestling someone like Flair, Arn Anderson or Barry Windham, who have the ability to carry him, Sting's weaknesses as a wrestler were obvious.

Even worse, Sting had the unenviable task of following Flair. Judging by the live crowd reaction, Flair was still the "star" of the show.

ETC: Even with the Flair-Luger match, the Clash wasn't well received in a post-show poll by the Wrestling Observer Newsletter: Just 18.2% thought it was a good show, while 74.9% thought it was a bad one. That was the worst reaction to an NWA show in years. ... **Badnews Brown** and **Paul Diamond** have been fired by the WWF for disciplinary reasons. Brown is going to Japan. ... **Bob Orton** is coming to the WWF in October. ... The next NWA pay-per-view show is Oct. 27 at the UIC Pavilion in Chicago, dubbed "Halloween Havoc." **Sting** defends against **Sid Vicious** in the main event. ... Pro wrestling continues to expand as the first two shows ever held in the People's Republic of China took place this past week. ... **Andre the Giant** is coming out of retirement for a one-week tour of Japan at the end of the month.



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